

RESISTANCE

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LONDON

November 2010

““ The anarchists behind London’s student riot will be hunted down and prosecuted with the full force of the law. ””

-David Cameron

CAIRO

February 2011

““ Yes, the transition has to start now to demonstrate to people inside Egypt that their aspirations are being understood. ””

-David Cameron

Inside: Student protests, tax cuts for banks, middle east unrest & more

Protests in London, Manchester

- NUS President chased by angry students

January saw the continuation of last year's explosive student protests, in which Tory HQ was occupied and ransacked as tens of thousands took to the streets of London to vent their anger at cuts and tuition fee hikes that now loom over universities and colleges around the UK. On Saturday 29 January, two protests, one in London and one in Manchester, took place simultaneously. In London, students marched past Millbank Tower, which last year was the flashpoint for what the papers described as a "mini-riot", the spontaneous occupation of the building that houses the Conservative Party headquarters. As the protesters split off into smaller groups, some headed to the Egyptian embassy to show solidarity for the ongoing Egyptian uprising (see page 4) while others dispersed into the crowds of shoppers on Oxford Street, one of London's busiest



high streets, to target stores owned by tax-dodging multinationals. Meanwhile in Manchester, National Union of Students (NUS) president Aaron Porter ended up on the run from a group of several hundred students after one of them tried to ask him questions about his support for police

violence against students and despicable conduct with regard to students' struggles. After he found refuge behind police lines, student protesters began a game of cat-and-mouse with the police in central Manchester, repeatedly escaping police attempts to kettle them (kettling is a common police tactic in

which demonstrators are forcibly contained within a police cordon, sometimes for hours). Elsewhere at the NUS rally, students booed Labour and NUS speakers off the stage and Aaron Porter's deputy, speaking in the stead of his indisposed boss, was pelted with eggs and couldn't finish.

More Tax Cuts for the Banks

A dry, technical change to Treasury rules amounts to a tax cut worth billions to the biggest companies. George Monbiot explains: "At the moment tax law ensures that companies based here, with branches in other countries ... have to pay only the difference between our rate and that

of the other country. If, for example, Dirty Oil PLC pays 10% corporation tax on its profits in Oblivia, then shifts the money over here, it should pay a further 18% in the UK, to match the corporate tax rate of 28%. But under the new proposals, companies will pay nothing at all in this country on money made by

their foreign branches." Switzerland is the only other place with such a rule, which is only going to be available to "medium to large" companies. The government themselves say that "large financial services companies" will make the most use of this rule. High Street names like Vodafone and Top Shop,

faced with UKUncut protests, have defended themselves by saying "we're doing nothing illegal" and "we pay a lot of tax." This rule change shows up the second of these to be a lie, and as no-one voted for it, shows that "legal" and "illegal" are just a matter of which politicians you buy.

Glasgow Students Occupy Closed Student Building

On 1 February 2011 the former Hetherington Research Club at Glasgow University was occupied and re-opened as 'The Free Hetherington'. Previously a learning and social space for postgraduate and mature students as well as staff, the Hetherington closed its doors in February 2010 after the university deemed it not financially viable. The building lay empty for nearly a year before being occupied. Complete freedom of access has meant that the space is currently being used for a variety of purposes – hosting free lectures from university staff as well as a range of workshops and talks by students and outside speakers. It is serving as a meeting space for a number of groups and offering a growing library and free shop. Events have been as broad as: a talk by a local grassroots anti-poverty organization, a knitting workshop, a kids' film-showing, first aid training, philosophy lectures, discussions on anarchist theory, a regular pub quiz and open mic night. Free tea and coffee are offered all day and the kitchen crew provides a vegan dinner for 20-30 people every evening. Since 1 February, the Free



Hetherington has operated not only as an alternative social and learning space but also as a base for anti-cuts struggle on campus. The University of Glasgow is currently facing unprecedented cuts and job losses, which have been proposed by the Senior Management Group with no consultation of students or staff. Entire courses and departments face being cut, including nursing, modern languages and anthropology. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education, which enables thousands of adults and non-school-leavers to access higher education every year, also faces being axed entirely. 16 February saw a demonstration of over 1000 students and staff, angered by the proposed 'restructuring' of the university, which many claim is part of a politically-motivated business strategy rather than simply being a response to financial constraints. There is certainly no academic basis for the proposed changes, and many fear that the consultation process for these proposals will not be as sincere and transparent as Management have claimed. Recognizing this, it is hoped that students and staff will come together and reject all the cuts on campus, not just those that affect them directly.

Many students have expressed that they will support staff members going on strike if the UCU (University and College Union) decides on that course of action. Both the occupation of the Free Hetherington and wider anti-cuts organizing on campus has demonstrated that staff and students are not prepared to passively accept these threats to the quality of education at the University.

Egypt erupts

Following 18 days of continuous protest which saw a million people gather in Tahrir ("Liberation") Square in Egypt's capital Cairo, the country's President of 30 years, Hosni Mubarak, was forced to step down, leaving Egypt under military rule. The three week protest saw police violence and hired thugs employed in a desperate attempt to shift the protesters, but the protesters refused to move, demanding an end to the President's dictatorial rule and the "emergency" laws he has used to keep Egypt under his heel for the last three decades.

After the military took power on 11 February, amid further brutal repression in which thousands of demonstrators were tortured and "disappeared", a wave of strikes, occupations and other industrial action has spread across the country like wildfire. Emboldened by their success in toppling the dictator, working class Egyptians are determined not to give up the struggle. Ignoring appeals from

their new rulers to return to work, strikers in cities up and down the country are demanding better conditions, better contracts, higher wages, health coverage, and the sacking of corrupt and unpopular state and union officials.

Strikes, sit-ins and protests are reported across dozens of industries - from the stock exchange and media organisations to steel mills and textile firms. On 14 February hundreds of workers attacked the offices of the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) and were beaten back by security, police, and union officials hurling missiles from the upper windows. ETUF are notoriously corrupt and were firm supporters of the Mubarak regime. The protesters demanded the right to independent unions, that ETUF be dissolved and its assets frozen, and that ETUF leaders be put on trial. Meanwhile workers across Egypt continue to strike, occupy and demonstrate, while the military regime looks weaker by the day.

Middle East Roundup

Following events in Tunisia this January (see Resistance #129), a wave of unrest has rocked the Arab world. We report just a handful of the struggles that have broken out over the past month.

Algeria

Despite an official police ban on demonstrations in Algiers, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Algeria's capital on Saturday 12 February. The cops attacked them with tear gas, while nearby, families squatting newly-built houses (Algeria suffers from a massive shortage of housing, with many living in slums) were violently evicted, their possessions thrown from upper-storey windows.

Yemen

Over the past month, the Yemeni capital Sanaa has been the scene of repeated protests by thousands of young people and other opponents of the President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has been in power for the past 32 years. While police and soldiers dressed as civilian supporters of Ali have attacked several demonstrations, the unrest continues, in Sanaa, in Taiz, and in the port city of Aden in the south.

Bahrain

Thousands of protesters in Manama, capital of the island state of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, have occupied the Pearl Roundabout in the centre of the city and are refusing to leave. Police have used tear gas and rubber bullets to attack demonstrations in villages surrounding the capital, which are the site of

regular skirmishes between coppers and local youths. Demands from the protesters include jobs, housing, and the release of political prisoners.

Iran

Last Valentine's Day (a prohibited festival in Iran!) people took to the streets in Tehran in their thousands in solidarity with the protest movements of Egypt and Tunisia. There were clashes with Iranian security forces (ordinary coppers and the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran's feared elite military police) as people tried to make their way to Azadi (Freedom) Square, many with blankets and food, only to be beaten back by police using batons and tear gas. Simultaneous protests took place in the cities of Isfahan, Mashhad and Shiraz.

Libya

Street battles also broke out between police and anti-government protesters in the city of Benghazi in Libya, the night of the day before a planned "Day of Anger" against the rule of infamous dictator "Colonel" Muammar al-Gaddafi. Protesters are said to have thrown stones and petrol bombs. Elsewhere, in the city of Zentan, hundreds of marchers are reported to have set up camp in the city centre, and set a cop shop on fire.



Wisconsin Workers Wage War on Anti-union Bill

Workers in the Northern US state of Wisconsin are battling against anti-union legislation being pushed by the state governor, Scott Walker. Under the pretext of cutting the state deficit, Walker's new laws will end collective bargaining for all public sector workers except firefighters and police. Strikes are already illegal for public sector workers in the state; the current system of collective bargaining is the only defence they have against attacks on pay and conditions. The new law will come alongside other measures including a three year pay freeze (this really means three years of pay cuts when inflation is accounted for) and a ban on unionising for

university workers. The response has been one of anger, with students, public sector workers, and retired people joining a 10,000-plus-strong demonstration at the state Capitol building on Tuesday 15 February. Earlier in the week high school students in Stoughton walked out to show support for their teachers, while protests took place at Universities in Milwaukee and Madison. This was followed by a city wide "sick-out" on Wednesday, which forced schools across Madison to close as 40% of teachers called in sick. At the time of writing the Wisconsin State Journal has reported that it is "unclear" whether teachers will return to work on Thursday or Fri-



day. Protests at the state Capitol continue. Wisconsin was the first state in the US to pass laws safeguarding collective bargaining, in 1936, and if Walker's succeeds then it will probably give other state governments the confidence to pass similar anti-union legislation. State governments

in Indiana and New York are already targeting public sector workers, in what could soon become a nation-wide assault of union-busting and austerity attacks. In this context, the struggle in Wisconsin is hugely important, and its results could effect the future of organised labour in the USA as a whole.

US Chamber of Commerce & the \$2 million spy

Recent revelations in the UK press about corporate spies in campaign groups like Plane Stupid and Campaign Against the Arms Trade have caused comment. A story from the US tech website Arstechnica.com makes them look like small fry, though.

Three security companies proposed to the US

Chamber of Commerce that it create a "fusion cell" of electronic spying operations at a cost of \$2 million per month. They gathered messages from union activists on facebook, Twitter and other websites to try and find links between the activists using software developed for intelligence services ("Palantir"). They

planned to create fake, "honeypot" websites to attract union activists and gather information about them.

The scheme by HBGary Federal was unmasked when its CEO, Aaron Barr, fell foul of the Anonymous hackers collective. After trying to identify some of their members, he found his email archive posted

across the internet, his website and backups deleted. Even a shiny new iPad was wiped clean. While its good to see him get his desserts, it shows that innocuous activities like running the "US Chamber-Watch" website are seen as a threat by those in power and that they have very deep pockets to fight us with.

Migrant fight in Greece

Three hundred migrants are staging a hunger strike in occupied municipal buildings in Athens and Thessaloniki to fight for legalization and equal rights for Greek workers. The Greek state has long employed a particularly hostile approach to foreign workers. Work permits are near impossible to get for those entering the country, with the legal system stacked against the interests of migrants and enforced by racist and corrupt officials (border police have even been implicated in the trafficking of women for the domestic sex trade).

The result is that many migrants are forced to live with no social security net, largely dependent on (illegal) precarious and temporary work. Work accidents and deplorable conditions are common within the manufacturing, cleaning and building trades which utilise this cheap stream of migrant workers (and enforce workplace discipline through the threat of deportation). This is also within a social climate that is becoming increasingly hostile to foreigners. The government and the media are keen to whip up hostility towards foreigners



and migrant workers as a means to divert focus from their full-scale attack on living standards in the country (and the highly unpopular conditions set by the IMF). As the hunger strikers state in their demands, in many cases the propaganda and demands of the fascist and far-right group have been adopted outright by the government. The Neo-Nazi group "Golden Dawn", for its part, received as high as a 20% share of the vote in certain districts of Athens in local elections held at the end of last year. In response to the strike, far-right activists detonated an explosive device outside a

social centre that supports migrants in Thessaloniki. The parliamentary Left (the Stalinist KKE and "Eurocommunist" SYRIZA), fearing for their electoral prospects, have been generally unsupportive of the cause of migrants. The result is that it is largely the autonomous, anti-authoritarian and anarchist groups who have been most supportive of the strikers. Numerous protests, rallies and general assemblies have been held throughout Greece over the past month in solidarity with the strikers and to raise awareness of the conditions of migrants. Anarchists in Athens

also attacked branches of the supermarket chain DIA which had banned migrants from entering its stores in the North-Western city of Igoumenitsa.

As of the writing of this article the strike is still ongoing (entering its 23rd day). The migrants are determined to continue in spite of the continued hostility towards them. Many of them see no alternative to the struggle, as they conclude in their demands, "we risk our lives because, either way, there is no dignity in our living conditions. We would rather die than allow our children to suffer what we have been through".

**It's OK
to call
your boss
a "dick"**

Ambulance worker Dawnmarie Souza was fired for comments she made to a friend on Facebook in 2009, calling her supervisor a "dick" and a "scumbag". She sued them for illegally firing her, with the help of the US National Labor Relations Board, because workers have the right to discuss their conditions of employment with coworkers.

The company, AMR, has settled out of court and changed its policies. A win for Souza but a loss for anyone looking forward to the bampot boss being forced to answer the question, "are you a dick to your employees?" in court.

Public Resistance Forces Government U-Turns

In the face of massive public opposition the Con-Dem government have been forced into a series of U-turns, the biggest of which concerned the sale of Britain's publicly managed woodlands for £350 million. Their decision not to flog off Britain's ancient forests came after over 650,000 people signed an on-line petition and a series of demonstrations were held across the country. In a hilarious understatement, embarrassed Environment Minister Caroline Spelman said, "we got that one wrong." While people have rightly celebrated the fact that our forests won't be sold off en masse, there is still an acute need for better protection of ancient woodland, our equivalent of the

rainforests, and the restoration of ancient woods currently planted with conifers. While Labour applauded the government's U-turn, when they were in power thousands of acres were lost – 850 ancient woodlands have been threatened by developers in the last decade. The message seems to be that we can't trust government nor business with our woods.

The forest sell-off isn't the only policy the government has dumped in recent months. Health secretary Andrew Lansley had planned to allow hospitals to compete against each other on the basis of the price they charged for services. For some reason this government thinks that going to hospital is no differ-

ent than popping down the shops and trying to find the cheapest offer on baked beans or coco pops. Critics - even on the right - pointed out that evidence from America and elsewhere showed that the only outcome of this would be a drop in quality. While the government's backtracking on price competition is welcome, they are still pressing ahead with the appalling NHS reforms and massive cuts in health services.

The government also backpeddled last month on plans to slash mobility pay for disabled people in care homes and from the introduction of tough new conditions for housing benefit. They haven't decided to stop the cuts, though, just delay the review of benefits.

They took a similar approach with attempts to slash public sector worker's pensions, deciding to delay the review. Any U-turn from this government is welcome. It shows that they can be shifted in the face of opposition – we don't have to wait another four years until elections come along. However, in the scale of social and economic cuts that are being proposed these are small victories. We don't need to reform the government – we need to get rid of them. Replacing them with Labour won't be any better. For every £5 the Con-Dems are cutting from public spending, Labour would have cut £4.

Bil'in

There are not many indignities that the villagers of Bil'in, in the occupied West Bank, haven't suffered in recent years: Constant harassment and incursions from the Israeli 'Defence' Force (IDF); night raids during which children are kidnapped at gunpoint and 'confessions' extracted from them under duress, implicating adult relatives; numerous kidnappings and several deaths of demonstrators against the illegal apartheid wall, which runs through the village.

As the Israeli state continues its policy of walling-in an entire people, the route chosen for the apartheid wall saw the villagers separated from approximately 60% of their farmland. The International Court of Justice ruled the wall illegal in July 2004 and in September 2004 the Israeli

Supreme Court declared that the route through Bil'in imposed undue hardship on the Palestinian population, for no appreciable increase in security for Israel, and that the wall must be re-routed.

The Defence Ministry agreed to abide by the ruling (of the Israeli Supreme Court) and immediately leapt into action. Just six short years later and, finally, there are signs that the sections of the wall through Bil'in are to be brought down and re-routed, a victory—of sorts—for the villagers and their supporters.

For the people of Bil'in haven't been alone in their struggle. The Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall has been organising weekly demonstrations every Friday since 2005, attended by many groups, including the International Solidarity Movement

and Anarchists Against The Wall. These weekly demonstrations have seen the villagers, Israelis and internationals march to the wall, armed only with placards and slogans, to be met with the full might of the Israeli 'Defence' Force.

Tear gas, smoke grenades, sound bombs, plastic bullets and live rounds, confronted by defiance, indomitable spirit and the odd stone or two. These confrontations have resulted in several deaths, including Bassem Abu Rahmah, killed when he was struck by a tear gas canister fired directly at him in April 2009, and his sister, Jawaher, who died from tear gas inhalation on New Years' Day this year. In a statement, Michael Sfar—attorney for the villagers in their legal battle against the Israeli state—said:

"The son was killed by a

directly aimed projectile, the daughter choked in gas. Two brave protestors against a regime that kills the innocent and doesn't investigate its criminals. We will not be quiet, we will not give up, we will not spare any effort until those responsible will be punished. And they will." Whether those responsible for the deaths will ever face justice seems unlikely. Perhaps a slightly more fitting memorial is this temporary victory, in one small battle, as the Wall is dismantled in Bil'in. This battle may be over, but the war—and the Wall—continues. Anarchists Against The Wall are in desperate need of funds to help fight their legal battles against the Israeli state and continue the struggle alongside the Palestinian people in places like Bil'in. Contact them at: <http://www.awalls.org/>

New AF Pamphlet

Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Anarchist Federation



New from the Anarchist Federation: Introduction to Anarchist Communism

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ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists (based in Britain and Ireland, but with many contacts overseas) which aims to abolish Capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world it's destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements (like the IRA) as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

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